How To Make an A on Any Day You Teach (aka, Practices of Good Teaching)

1. Interact briefly with students in a friendly manner before beginning the lesson. They need to know you care before they will care to know what you have for them to learn.

2. BEFORE: Post student friendly learning goal(s) on the board along with the form of formative assessment they can expect at the end of the lesson, and announce them to students.

3. Even if done on another day, Announce or remind WHY students are learning these goals. How do they apply to the real world beyond school?

4. Ask (orally or written) varied depths of knowledge questions with the lesson’s academic vocabulary words to encourage critical thinking, including levels 2 and 3. Always let students have time to do a solo think or write and then pair talk before cold calling on any individual student. Use COLD CALLING only in your classroom, requiring all students be active learners at all times.

5. Because learners need varied instructional methods, Have at least 3 different learning activities/strategies clearly related to the learning goal(s) being taught, include one using cooperative learning. These can include the opening and closing activities. Try to show off with the technology available. Appealing to different learning styles—auditory, visual, reading/writing, kinesthetic—can help differentiate your teaching methods. Be sure to scaffold and model during your lesson (Gradual Release of Responsibility Method of Teaching) before asking students to perform a task.

6. Have teacher pre-determined groups or use a clever—but not time-consuming—method to create groups rather than just telling them to make groups, assign specific roles, give written/visual, not just oral, directions BEFORE moving students, and insist they turn desks to face each other and make eye contact. Give a student friendly ice breaker question to discuss first in their group/partnership to set a positive tone in the group.

7. Have an effective set transition/focus phrase to get students’ attention, “All eyes on me.” “Your attention, please.” “Time Out.” “Ok,” or “Alright,” don’t count. NO “SH”, please. Use your teacher voice and wait for EVERY STUDENT’S quiet attention before giving any verbal comments. If necessary, turn your body/.head to focus on a few students who aren’t cooperating. Remember, always going to the same location in the room to call attention can help students to focus.

8. Be enthusiastic—IF you aren’t, they won’t be either—about your lesson and leave the podium to interact with students.

9. Leave time for a written formative assessment on the goal taught which you collect and use to gather data. AFTER: Based on the data collected, Plan to re-teach the learning goal tomorrow if necessary.

BONUS: Ask a student to orally repeat your directions after giving them. And/or If a student says, “I don’t know,” when called on, state, “Tell me what you would you say if you did know?” (Jim Burke tip!)